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EDITORIAL COMMENT

THE PRIVATE NURSE AS A PUBLIC SERVANT

Whenever there is any sort of festivity in a city, at the time of great conventions and expositions, during the holidays, on Fourth of July, etc., we find nurses employed in institutions at their posts, ready to meet any unusual demands that may be made upon the hospital in its service to the public. At such times, the officers, especially those permanently employed, frequently work long hours uncomplainingly, but the experience of those in charge of nurses' registries is this, that at such times as we have mentioned the private duty nurse withdraws her name from the waiting list to become a participant in holiday pleasures or sight-seeing, instead of remaining on call, as we believe she should, to meet such demands as may arise for her professional service.

In every section of the county there is a healthy season when work in hospitals and for physicians and nurses is exceedingly slack. It would seem only reasonable that private duty nurses, recognizing this season, as they must after very limited experience, should take their vacations at that time of year and be at their posts again when the heavy season opens. But we find, year after year, the same groups of women sitting idle at home during the slack time, complaining to physicians and to registrars of their lack of work and then, when sickness increases, as it so frequently does with the change of season at holiday time, refusing to respond to calls or choosing this time for visits to their homes. Of course those nurses who are so popular that they are always in demand feel that they can afford to do this. Others who are not so successful do it to their own loss and then criticize the directories if they are not supplied with work at the moment of their return. In the meantime, the directories, which are maintained for the convenience of the public as well as for the nurse, has passed through a season of

extreme embarrassment in not being able to supply the needs of the sick for nursing care.

We believe that nurses everywhere, whether successful or otherwise, because of the nature of their occupation, have a responsibility to the public and should be at their posts of duty, whether in an institution or the private field, at those seasons when the demand for their services is greatest and we believe that at holiday time they should arrange among themselves and with their registrars for a reasonable number to remain subject to call. We do not find physicians or clergymen leaving their posts of duty without providing some one to fill their places during their absence and we believe that nurses have a responsibility to the public as great as theirs.

We have great sympathy with private nurses. We know from actual experience how trying are the irregularities of their life and how strenuously they sometimes work with seemingly little appreciation, but we believe that they are public servants and that their sense of responsibility as such needs to be stimulated while in the hospital and later through association life. It is only nurses themselves, working through their organization and registries, who can develop and uphold these standards.

FRAUDULENT AGENTS

We have repeatedly requested nurses when subscribing to the JOURNAL or renewing subscriptions to send their money directly to the Rochester office. We have stated many times that there are no special terms which are authorized to be made by anyone other than those representing the Rochester office. There are no authorized combinations with popular magazines and, since the withdrawal of the states of Washington and Oregon from affiliations with the *Pacific Coast Journal*, there is now only one combination with a nursing magazine, that with the *Public Health Nurse Quarterly*. From time to time we have heard, in the past, of nurses entrusting their money to agents who have failed to submit it to the JOURNAL, but recently complaints have been so numerous that we have come to recognize a deliberate plan on the part of some one to defraud our nurses of their money. From facts that we have gathered, a young man calling himself a student has gained permission to solicit for the JOURNAL in hospitals. Naturally, with such an introduction, pupils and graduates have unhesitatingly placed their subscriptions with him, accepting in return a printed receipt of a magazine agency in Milwaukee. These printed forms, we learn, were stolen from a representative of that company. The subscriptions so obtained are never turned in and the

transaction is a complete loss to the nurse. In one single hospital we know of his having taken away \$30 and this same person has operated in the far West, in Detroit, Oswego, Syracuse and New York City.

There are a number of large, well-known magazine agencies, such as the Franklin Square, Crowley's, etc., which may be trusted to transmit subscriptions placed with them, but we recognize no solicitors other than trained nurses who have been officially appointed by us to do this work in certain localities and who are always women well known in their communities. We make our JOURNAL headquarters with the registrars of central directories as far as we are able.

We believe that a journal of this kind, which is the official organ of so many nursing organizations and which represents the nursing interests of so large a section of the country, should be handled by nurses, as far as possible, and that such commissions as are allowed should be for the benefit of nurses.

The quickest and most reliable way to subscribe for the JOURNAL is to send the money (\$2.00), in whatever form is most convenient, directly to the subscription office at Rochester. Acknowledgment of its receipt is made within twenty-four hours and delay in receiving a proper acknowledgment or in receiving the JOURNAL should be reported immediately.

CLARA BARTON

There will be found in the department of Book Reviews, in this issue of the JOURNAL, a notice of the new life of Clara Barton which has recently been published. The book is of good size, not too voluminous for comfortable perusal, and makes most fascinating reading. It is a book which should be added to all training school libraries, for though Clara Barton was not a graduate nurse and received only such training as came to her through her actual experiences on the field of battle, she did a wonderful work for humanity, both in our own Civil War and during the Franco-Prussian war abroad, and she unquestionably laid the foundations of Red Cross work in this country. The book is timely and much needed, aside from its human interest, because many people have been in doubt as to the place which should be accorded to Clara Barton in the work of the world, whether she should be regarded as a saint and heroine, equal to Florence Nightingale in her devotion to duty and to the relief of suffering, or whether she should be looked upon as a person of warm heart and great zeal, whose use of public funds was questionable and who was in no sense a leader. There has been till now no authoritative answer to these questions.

The reader of Mr. Epler's biography will gain a clear, well-balanced idea of the woman and her work and will probably reach the conclusion,

with us, that Clara Barton was neither a misjudged saint nor an over-estimated zealot. She was a great woman, with a great mind, filled with devotion to suffering humanity. Her army nursing was done before the days of asepsis, and according to modern standards she was probably as well qualified to dress wounds as were many of the surgeons under whom she worked. Her greatest work was done before the days of trained nursing and before organization methods had been so universally adopted in every branch and department of philanthropy. It is clearly brought out by her biographer that she was an individualist, that she did not appreciate the necessity for the reorganization of the Red Cross with its board of control and multiplicity of committees and for that reason declined to allow her name to stand as honorary president of the organization, which gave rise to much hard feeling on the part of her friends and led to misunderstanding on the part of those who had been associated with her in Red Cross work.

Personal devotion is always of priceless value, but in this age that alone cannot go far in solving problems of vast scope. Clara Barton belongs with the path-finders of humanity, those who clear the way for others to follow, whose work is set aside that a greater may take its place, and who do not always receive full appreciation for the sacrifices they have made, without which the final end could not have been attained.

In spite of the tremendous strain of her war experiences and at times of pestilence, flood and fire, and although she was exceedingly small and delicately built, Miss Barton lived to be past ninety.

A CORRECTION

Miss Hilliard wishes through these pages to make a correction, with apologies, for a statement which she made in her article in the December JOURNAL on Inspection of Nurse Training Schools in New York State. In the list of schools outside the state, recently registered with the Regents, appeared the name of All Souls Hospital, Morristown, N. J. This is a mistake, as the school of All Souls is not registered in New York State.

HOURLY NURSING

Section or round table on Hourly Nursing will be held during the convention of the American Nurses' Association in New Orleans in April. The chairman of this section is anxious to obtain the names and addresses of nurses engaged in such work. They are asked to communicate directly with Alma E. Wrigley, 300 Congress Place, Pasadena, California.